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In the Day's Work

London: Humphrey Milford

Oxford University Press

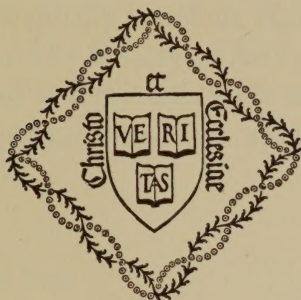


In the Day's Work


By

Daniel Berkeley Updike

Author of "Printing Types: Their
History, Forms, and Use"



Cambridge
Harvard University Press
1924



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PRINTED BY D. B. UPDIKE, THE MERRYMOUNT PRESS, BOSTON, U. S. A.

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Note

The paper entitled "On the Planning of Printing" first appeared in *The Fleuron*, London, and is included through the kindness of its editor, Mr. Oliver Simon. "Style in the Use of Type" was originally issued in *Handicraft*, a publication of The Society of Arts and Crafts, of Boston, and is reprinted (with some slight changes) by permission of that organization.

D. B. U.

The Merrymount Press
June 24, 1924


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On the Planning of Printing



*On the
Planning of Printing*

T must of necessity be," said Sir Joshua Reynolds, "that even works of genius, like every other effect, as they must have their cause, must also have their rules; it cannot be by chance that excellencies are produced with any constancy or any certainty, for this is not the nature of chance: but the rules by which men of extraordinary parts—and such as are called men of genius—work, are either such as they discover by their own peculiar observations, or of such a nice texture as not easily to admit being expressed in words. Unsubstantial, however, as these rules may seem, and difficult as it may be to convey them in writing, they are still seen and felt in the mind of the artist; and he works from them with as much certainty as if they were embodied upon paper. It is true these refined principles cannot always be made palpable, as the

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more gross rules of art; yet it does not follow but that the mind may be put in such a train that it still perceives by a kind of scientific sense that propriety which words . . . can but very feebly suggest."

Sir Joshua said this in regard to painting, in his case surely the work of genius; but if we substitute for the word "genius" the word "art," we have a quotation which is applicable even to the task of designing satisfactory pieces of typography. Although rules for designing suitable printing may seem unsubstantial and difficult to convey in words, it is still true that they are seen and felt in the mind of the worker. They are illusive rules, and yet none the less a man works from them with as much certainty as if they were set down on paper. It is because they are so illusive that many persons believe that, in designing printing, there are no rules at all; because they commonly think of rules as matters of precise measurement and definite proportion. As a matter of fact, the best rules for planning work are general rules, and rules for the mind rather than for the hand—no less real because

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applying to what may be called, in a sense, a spiritual matter. So in properly laying out printing (which is nothing more than successfully designing it for a given object) it is necessary to have a certain mental equipment, which is, to tell the truth, where most designers of printing fail. Having said this, I may divide the subject into three parts: the first of which treats of the apparatus with which we work; the second, of the requirements of the persons for whom we work; and the third, of those principles on which we plan our work; or, to put it more simply, the classification of our material, our relations with customers, and how to plan the printing they ask us to do.

I. Arrangement of "Specimen-Books"

The specimens of the type which a printing-office possesses should be arranged in orderly and convenient fashion so that the time of the man who is planning the printing may not be wasted. There is no need of going to the expense of printing elaborate volumes to show our types. A blank book in which proofs of type are pasted will do very well, or a "loose-

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leaf" folder is better still, as it permits additions in proper sequence. The same passage (either in Latin or English) may be used throughout the volume to show types for book-pages and the comparative amount of matter which can be set in various sizes of type. For instance, in a Caslon series the first type may be the smallest size shown; a passage of ten or twelve lines may be set in four ways, solid, and leaded with 1-point, 2-point, and 3-point leads. On the same page an alphabet of capitals, small capitals, swash letters, ligatured letters, and all the "peculiar sorts" used with that particular fount should be displayed, and the amount of type available for use should be stated. In the specimen-book arranged by the late Theodore De Vinne for the De Vinne Press, not only capitals, small capitals, lower-case, and italic in the fount were shown, but also numbers, accented letters, mathematical signs, signs of the zodiac, and every peculiar sort were displayed; and the foundry in which the type was cast was also mentioned.*

* This was an occasional feature of earlier specimen-books. In the specimen-book of Pierres of Paris of 1785, and the little specimen issued for the Temple Printing Office (J. Moyes), London, 1826,

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The four variously leaded paragraphs just spoken of might occupy two facing pages. The next two facing pages would be devoted to italic of the same size, similarly leaded. Then would come the next larger size of roman in the same series with its italic, and so on, up to great primer or 18-point, which would probably be the largest size of type used for a book-page. In any size above great primer, a few lines of roman and italic type with the alphabet and special characters could occupy a page by themselves.

Transitional types treated in a like manner would come next; then modified old styles; and finally the modern faces. Special faces such as Bodoni, Garamond, or French old style, could be arranged in the same way. These might be followed by black-letters and scripts. After each series a table of graded sizes of its capital letters should be exhibited—from the smallest size of capitals to the largest, “small capitals” being inserted in their proper place, so that the variety of sizes of capitals available

the name of the founder immediately follows the name of the type displayed.

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may be seen at a glance. By placing small tabs on the edge of the page at which each new type-family begins, marked with a number or name, much time would be saved in turning to founts one wished to look at.

Ornamental alphabets, ornaments, etc., may occupy a second division or another volume of the same size bound in another colour. In this second part, alphabets could be arranged in series, by sizes; or according to styles. Typographical “flowers” should be grouped according to size or style or arranged according to date of issue. In the specimen-book of Briquet, published at Paris in 1757, such ornaments are displayed very ingeniously. Each “flower” is numbered; a single one is first shown, and is followed by the same “flower” arranged in rows to show the effect if used as a border. Next the “flower” is shown in various combinations—back to back, in two rows together, one running in the ordinary way and the other upside down, etc. A great many effective and ingenious patterns may be made from the same ornament placed in different positions, and still greater variety can be

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had by combining two ornaments, as a study of old specimen-books will show.

Some pages at the end of this division may be reserved for the miscellaneous type ornaments which slowly accumulate in every printing-house.

It may be said that this seems a practical plan for the man who lays out the printing, but that such a book would not be attractive to a customer choosing type. But why let a customer make a choice of type? As Fournier said, "men who pride themselves most on knowing about books, are often very much embarrassed when it comes to giving an exact idea of the kind of type in which these books are printed; ordinarily they are at a loss for the names of the types; sometimes they miscall them, but ordinarily they employ inexact expressions—saying that such a book is printed in large or small type, which only gives a vague, indeterminate idea, and means nothing at all." And once upon a time there was an author who returned his proofs, with the message that he hoped the type would be larger when the book was printed! But by the time a customer

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has stated what he thinks he wants (for he does not always end by wanting what he at first thinks he does), the designer has formed an idea of the range of types which it is best to use. If a customer insists that he must see the type to be used, one or two types—either of which is suitable—may be shown him. There is something to be learned, here, from the old trick of allowing a person to choose a card from a pack, and telling him what that card will be before he looks at it. If well done, the trick never fails, because the man who is selecting the card does not really select it, but has a certain card dealt into his hand. I believe a customer should be treated in much the same way, with this difference: that instead of allowing him to think he is selecting one among fifty-two cards, I should give him (and tell him I was giving him) but four cards to choose from—all aces of different suits! In this way a customer would certainly exercise a choice, but it would only be a choice of the four best kinds of the same thing! No one wishes to fool a customer, but it is equally unfair to permit him to fool himself. He should

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get what he is paying for: the best knowledge the printer possesses.

II. Relations with Customers

Thus we have suddenly arrived at the relation of the printer to his customers. Cardinal Newman speaks somewhere of the need of practising an "economy in imparting religious truth." This being interpreted signifies to keep back something; and has its authority in certain rather "unevangelical" passages in the New Testament, to the effect that it is at times wise to give out only as much truth as the hearer is able to bear. This is usually the part of wisdom in a printer's treatment of a customer. He cannot be told everything; in fact, he can only be told (advantageously to himself) what it is good for him to know! Anglo-Saxons detest this kind of reasoning, because they say that it appears shifty and untruthful; but what they really subconsciously dislike is the principle of authority inherent in it. As a race we resent experts—though all Americans, and no doubt some English, secretly believe that they are experts themselves! So,

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though printers often act on some such idea, they do not fancy calling it an "economy in imparting truth." One may hold back information, but it is bad form to admit to yourself that you do, or to hold the theory that it may be defensibly done. Such people agree in principle with George III when he said, "Shakespeare often wrote sad stuff, but one must not say so."

As customers fall into many different classes, they have to be met in many different ways. They certainly sometimes bring difficult typographical problems to the printer, for which they suggest or dictate ridiculous solutions. But a printer cannot be of use to typography by dismissing their views and them. His part is to lead them into the more excellent way, by showing them what can be done to improve their work and what cannot, and by explaining the reason why. Thus he can avoid needlessly annoying a "client," and encourage him not only to have this particular piece of work printed well, but to have more work printed better; for most people will use good types if they can only be made to see the reason of their goodness. I remember once being obliged

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to print, for a personage who dealt in muffins, a circular which was to show their excellence; and to this end he showed me an announcement printed in coloured ink from horrid types, on brown note-paper, with a "hemstitched" perforated edge, as a model for what was to be done. This circular he had secured from the establishment of a milliner. His mind worked in this way: that as an expensive hat was advertised by a circular adorned with perforations, and this hat cost one hundred times more than a muffin, a circular adapted for the hat must be many times better than the ordinary method of muffin advertising! I explained that there was a suitable and even ideal way of advertising muffins as well as hats, and that to advertise a muffin as one would a hat might very likely mislead the public about its digestibility! We ended by making an advertisement which I thought pretty, and he said was extremely so, *and it sold the muffins!* What more could you ask? Thus it is a part of wisdom, though not, alas, always of inclination, to try to teach a customer—to lead and not drive him. But there are times when, if a cus-

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tomer insists on employing some bad, freaky types in cheap, tawdry display of colour, you are right in telling him that he must have his work done elsewhere.

That amusing person, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in a letter to her daughter, Lady Bute, said that "people commonly educate their children as they build their houses, according to some plan they think beautiful, without considering whether it is suitable for the purpose for which they are designed. Almost all girls of quality are educated as if they were to be great ladies. You should teach yours to confine their desires to probabilities." And this is just as true of printing as of education or house-building, and, I am told, is a useful idea when marrying off a daughter.

But customers seldom see that the essential thing in all printing is that it be suitable for the purpose for which it is designed, and printers have not based their practice on any such sensible rule. If printers had more of a standard and a stiffer one, both about the types they employ and the way in which they use them, printing would be better. The printer, if he has no

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standard, *must* allow the customer to dictate his own wishes about types. He is defenseless, no matter how indefensible typographically the customer's ideas may be. In fixed opinions of what types are good and what are bad, the average printer has been a most spiritless individual. His long-suffering has become a tradition, and for him to assert that there are things typographically which he will not do, has the expectedness of the much talked-of (but seldom seen) turning worm! Clergymen, business men, landscape architects, school teachers, and contractors all have what they call "ideas" about types and their arrangement, and make no bones about telling the printer what they are. Yet these people are profoundly ignorant of typography. If the printer had an educated standard in typography, he could show them that they were so. But he has nothing to suggest. He is not leading, but following; if he takes any other position, it is troublesome to him and he is misunderstood by his public. Pained surprise is upon the faces of friends; annoyed resistance is shown by the customer. "Prudential reasons" are suggested by uncles,

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“kindness” by aunts, “horse-sense” by business acquaintances. The printer who sticks to a standard is usually supposed to be arbitrary, autocratic, wilful, conceited, and generally top-lofty. Now, he may be all this, but he is not of necessity so; and as a matter of fact, he is sometimes as weary of his standard as any customer can be. There is, however, a standard. It can be held to, though not without trouble. The lack of it has reduced much modern printing to what it is.

These are some of the difficulties we meet with in dealing with people who know little about printing and, to some extent, admit it. But there is a second class who are worse: those who take a superior tone about it and are very sure that they know the printer's inmost thoughts. To prove this they use an inaccurate semi-technical jargon which has taught me the wisdom of never trying to talk in the terms of another person's trade—I do not deal in architectural terms before an architect, though I may inflict them on my defenseless doctor! To the mind of this second class there are two kinds of work that a press may do, differen-

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tiated by the terms “artistic” and “commercial”—terms very carelessly and very currently used. It is often said (as if it were a compliment) that such and such a printer does not do commercial work, but only artistic. One may say that he endeavours to do *good* work, if that is “artistic”; and he *sells* it, so it is after all “commercial.” The rejoinder is, “But I mean printing of a commercial character, *i.e.* used in business”—the inference being that such printing cannot be “artistic” (poor, overworked word!), which, thank God, is often the case! The real difficulty lies in what is meant by artistic printing. To my mind it means: printing as exactly and agreeably suited as possible to the object for which it is to be used—commercial printing being just as capable of possessing this excellence as any other variety. But most people, if they stopped to analyse, would find that they really meant by “artistic printing” something queer, dear, and not well adapted to daily use, delivered later than expected; and by “commercial,” something commonplace, cheap, nasty, and done in a hurry. The truth is that the best presses

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do but one kind of work, which is neither solely commercial nor artistic, but both, *i.e.* good. Then again, in the mind of the class of customers of whom I speak, literary interest is confused with problems of handicraft. A mere circular or an advertisement, they say, cannot be interesting to arrange. One can never make such persons understand that it is not the matter to be printed, but the problem of design presented by that matter, which is interesting to a printer. An edition of Dante may be a great bore to execute, and offer no very difficult problem; while one may be exceedingly amused and interested by a circular about tea! To see this requires the professional point of view, and does not support the lazy generalizations of the amiable amateur. He will continue to call printing "very artistic" and "only commercial," and rather fancy that he commends himself to a printer by so doing.

Perhaps it may be said that in old times there was not such a variety of types as there is now, or so many kinds of work to be done. This is true. But it is quite easy to restrict the repertoire of types in any office to *good types*

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and to permit their use only in legitimate ways. The earliest printers were often learned men, and yet perhaps their contemporaries thought that they took themselves too seriously. But what they took seriously was not themselves, but their work. They were educated enough and independent enough to hold to certain ideals. If Aldus had watered down his manner of printing and continually varied his types to suit other people's views, he would never have been heard of. None the less, the heads of contemporary Italian uncles and aunts were sadly shaken, perhaps, and friends of the family were seriously distressed. We remember the types and books of Aldus still; but the names of these "wise and prudent" are forgotten.

III. Some Principles in Planning Printing

The man who has to plan or lay out a piece of printing should pause a few moments before he attacks his problem, and his plan is best made alone in a quiet room (from which examples of other people's work are banished) wherein is a large table, and on it nothing but the manuscript of the work to be arranged

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and a book of specimens of types. Supposing the work to be planned is a book: give thought not only to what the book is about and to the author from whom the work emanates, but to the public for whom it is intended, and to its trade conditions; and in this light examine the manuscript from beginning to end. By the time the designer has done this, some mental picture of what seems a good typographic form for the work will present itself; and his "job" is to express this image in terms of type. "The prophetic eye of taste" (wrote the poet Gray), "when it plants a seedling, already sits under the shadow of it, and enjoys the effect it will have from every point of view that lies in the prospect." So it must be with the designer of printing: he should be able to visualize the effect of his work in its finished form before a single type is set.

Furthermore, in planning this book one must think of its purpose, of its convenience to the reader for that purpose—and remember, also, any requirements as to uniformity with other books or other series. The plan must also provide for illustrations, if such there are to be,

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and determine how they are to be rendered; for these have a distinct relation to type, which must in some way be made to harmonize with them. Finally, there is the question of limitation of expense, and the price at which the book is to sell, which will give some idea of how much can be spent upon it. All this has to be thought out. And after that we may proceed to choose the type which we think will best suit the above requirements.

Having done this, take from the manuscript those pages which give (1) a solid mass of text; (2) tabular or unusual matter; and (3) quotations or poetry. The page of solid matter, already mentally designed, being the norm, one can then judge how successfully this imaginary page will permit the introduction of those various features which the unusual pages demand. Some of those latter features may require a modification of the imaginary normal page. But if the imaginary page, with these exceptions in view, is successfully designed, it can be set up. If this preliminary work is conscientiously done, that which results from it will be good, because so well adapted for its purpose

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as to appear inevitable. The result will give the same sense of satisfaction that a well-made glove or a good tennis racket produces. These principles apply to everything that is printed: to an edition of Aristotle, to a choral book for a cathedral, to the circular for a pottery or a sale of handkerchiefs, to the label for a pot of jam.

There is a passage in the *Architecture* of Vitruvius that may serve as a text for printers who forget that the adaptation of a thing for its purpose is half its charm. Speaking of winter dining-rooms, he says that "neither paintings on grand subjects, nor delicacy of decoration in the cornice work of the vaultings, is a serviceable kind of design, because they are spoiled by the smoke from the fire and the constant soot from the lamps." "In these rooms," he adds, "there should be panels above the dadoes, worked in black, and polished with yellow ochre, or vermilion blocks interposed between them." And he goes on in the same practical strain to recommend the Greek method of making floors of a porous

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material, so that at dinner parties whatever is poured out of cups, "no sooner falls than it dries up, and the servants who wait there do not catch cold from that kind of floor although they may go barefoot." Vitruvius makes, as all good craftsmen do, the necessities of the case the factors of his choice of decoration and material. Indeed, the limitations of a piece of work are often a help to him who plans it. "Any designer is assisted, though also limited, by conditions of construction as well as by art considerations," says a recent writer. "A thorough knowledge and acknowledgement of these conditions will enable the designer, no matter in what material he works, to make the most of his opportunities; and the recognition of his limitations should prove a help rather than a hindrance to him. The architect is limited in the size, site, and cost of his building. The designer is restricted to the use of a certain number of colours for his carpet, and is compelled to recognize the conditions of its manufacture. The artist must plan the positions, form the colour of the features of interest in his picture. In fact, none of them

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are absolutely free in their work. If they recognize their limitations, they know that there are things they may do, and things which they cannot do; and the success or failure of their efforts will be largely influenced by their acceptance of the conditions under which they work."

Bearing in mind these limitations, and also Morris's three propositions: "First, that a page should be clear and easy to read; second, the types well designed; and third, the margins in due proportion to the page of letter"; and that "furthermore, in a book the effect of headlines, the size of type in relation to the size of page, spacing between words, leading, style of type-face, title-page, and decorations have all to be thought of"—we have the problem before us.

If our books are to be purely retrospective volumes, reprints in the Gothic style, Renaissance style, or the French eighteenth century manner, that call for close study of books of the period, there is little opportunity to go wrong, if enough time and thought be devoted to the problem. But the important charac-

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teristics of a given style are not always those which at first glance appear to be so. Consider an Aldine book. In reproducing one, many printers would lose sight of the fact that the characteristic points of the Aldine edition were as much Aldus's use of small roman capitals combined with a slightly larger italic, as his use of italic for the text of an entire volume. The particular point which needs emphasis in planning reproductive work is that the study of old models must be minute—not alone in the type used, but in all details of its management.

But nine times out of ten a printer's work is to design pages for modern books. It is not enough that such a book should be legible because set in good type, clearly arranged, and sharply printed. Over and above this, there is a suitability which is as important, and which constitutes the charm of typography. Of course no piece of printing is good for anything which is not legible. Yet granted this, it may still be a failure if it breaks down along the parallel lines of literary and artistic suitability. A prayer-book may be printed in a type which is read-

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able, but which is so out of tune with liturgical work that no person who wanted a prayer-book would buy it. You could not sell *Punch*, however well printed, in black-letter; not because black-letter is not in itself a good type-form, but because it is not appropriate nor the kind we like in illustrated humorous periodicals. So while a book must be easily read, it must also be printed in a manner suitable for its purpose—attractive to the cultivated through the mind, as well as to the ignorant through the eye. Thus a modern book is often difficult to plan successfully because it involves a personal view of the question, and there is no explicit guide in designing work of this sort. The designer can succeed only by his ability and taste in taking advantage of the factors in the problem which are pointing out how the book is to be designed. Each piece of printing has a still, small voice of its own if we can but hear it. To listen to it saves taking many “false routes.”

The subject-matter of a book should, as has been suggested, furnish a clue to its appropriate treatment. If you are to design a modern

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book like Vernon Lee's *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy*, you will not produce a suitable or agreeable effect if you use black-letter headlines or a modern German aesthetic roman type for its text, both of which connote an entirely different order of ideas. Give a slight suggestion of an eighteenth century Italian volume to your modern book by introducing into it a few characteristic eighteenth century Italian type-forms or methods of arrangement, which can be adapted without affectation to the work of to-day. The Italian eighteenth century book should not be copied, but it should be suggested. On the other hand, if you plan a book in such modern fashion that it recalls nothing of the eighteenth century, but might as well be *Stormonth's Dictionary* as far as charm goes, you have not made as good a scheme as you can with the material at hand. Lack of practicality is the most serious fault; but lack of suitability or appropriateness is still a fault, and one which the intelligent typographer must know how to overcome. The two horses must be driven together!

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There is, too, the tendency to strive for undue originality. Now originality is all very well, but it must be an improvement on what is less original, and therefore more commonly used. I have often, when travelling, been tempted to go where scarcely any one else had been, because it seemed rather an original thing to do, and interesting (at least, to me) to tell about afterward. When I got to my destination I usually found that the reason the trip was not popular was because it was not in the least worth while to have taken it! The same is true in typography. Most experiments, wise and otherwise, have already been tried, and the sure way—which is not very original now—is on the whole the best way, unless it can be so much improved that its utility can be recognized at once. If it seems commonplace, it is often so because it is so much the best—merely common-sense!

It was said of Congreve that “his nice scholarship had taught him the burden of association which time had laid upon this word or that. He used the language of his own day like a master, because he was anchored securely

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to a knowledge of the past." A man, to become a master of typography, should have this same anchorage. His typography should be allusive, and his originality should consist in perceiving opportunities for allusiveness when most printers would not. A modern book should show that the man who planned it has a knowledge of old styles, but never allows this knowledge to impair suitability for to-day's purpose. No matter what book is to be planned, you must always ask these questions: What is it to be used for? Where is it to be used? By whom is it to be used? What is the most suitable, practical, simple, orderly, and historical method of producing it? — questions of universal application, with answers capable of endless variation. The result of such well-laid plans should be typography which is good for what it is meant to be, yet decorative too.

For ephemeral printing—circulars, prospectuses, etc.—we have to follow the principles laid down in planning books, except that we may treat the printing more fancifully and lightly. There, more than ever, we can hear the voice of the work speaking to us, if we are

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willing to listen. If we are printing a syllabus of studies, we must think of the age of the person by whom the studies are pursued. If it is a lesson-book for children, the type should be larger, and its various features more clearly defined, than if intended for mature persons. In all works of education, where the aim in view is the most lucid possible statement, the typography should be of a transparent nature, *i.e.* which attracts no attention to itself and is merely a vehicle to convey the words of the printed page to the reader's mind. If a title-page used in educational printing permits of a slightly decorative treatment, the kind of institution which presents the work must be kept in mind. If it is a seminary for clergy, it might have an ecclesiastical look; if a school of commerce, it should have a strictly business-like appearance. If it is a literary society, an old style type may be used; whereas for the school of commerce it would be better to employ a modern face type. But for the religious seminary, school of commerce, or literary society, it is always possible to employ a type which is thoroughly good; the pages may be

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well proportioned and well imposed; the type well spaced and properly leaded; the impression clear and nervous. When the work is done, if it fulfils its purposes in the most suitable manner, it will have "that note of rightness which, evasive, indescribable, and intangible, nevertheless clearly marks off the work of a craftsman from that of a hack."

One can only plan successfully these smaller pieces of work by considering minutely what they are meant to accomplish. Let us take a menu. What questions would be uppermost in one's mind in planning that? The first that would occur to me would be the hour of the meal and where it was to be served. Was it to be by day or night? If by day, by artificial light or not? The colour of the card and the size of type would be somewhat dependent on this. Was there any particular scheme of colour in the decorations of the table? Because my menu must either match or at least not be discordant with it. Was it to be a big table with ample room for each guest, or a small one? Was the menu to be laid on a napkin or to stand upright? That would dictate my

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choice of size; for a menu is an incident, not a feature, at a dinner, and should not be so large as to be in the way if laid down, nor so big as to knock over glasses and fall into one's plate if it is to stand. Decide all these little points in the light of "What is the thing used for? Where is it to be used? By whom is it to be used? What is the most suitable, practical, simple, orderly, and historical method of producing it?" For even menus have a history, and were first used in the household of the Duke of Brunswick at Ratisbon in the first half of the sixteenth century. By consulting some of the French books which have been written on this and allied subjects, you will find out "a number of things."

Some one brings a programme for a *musical* to be printed. Here, again, you must know the hour; it must be printed on a single sheet of paper or upon a card; it must not have a printed border close to the margin; it must be in fairly large type. Why? Because the light makes a difference in the colour of paper and ink to be used; because a programme of more than one page rustles when turned over; be-

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cause the ink may spoil light gloves if it is too near the edge and is much handled; and because all ages and kinds of eyes are to read it. If it is too long a concert for a programme on one page, then one can use a soft or unsized paper, so that it will not "rattle" when turned. And as to the style of the thing, "the world is all before you where to choose." What is the music to be played? old or modern, French or English, sacred or secular, serious or gay? There are all sorts of sources to be consulted for the appropriate decorations for these varied classes of music.

Again: a service for the consecration of a bishop is to be printed. Now, in the Roman Catholic or Anglican communions, the canon of the Mass or consecration of the Holy Eucharist is the most solemn moment of the service, which must not be disturbed by turning leaves. So one would print all that part of the office on two facing pages and let the liturgical matter before and after come as it would. For a Protestant order of service, where there is no celebration of the sacrament, it is sufficient that the "turnovers" do not come in the

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middle of prayers, if the prayers are printed in full. About liturgical printing there are many other points to be kept in mind. I merely mention this as one of them.

Every piece of work is different, yet each is governed by common-sense illuminated by imagination. Project yourself into the situation of the user. What does he need? How does he feel? Where is he? If your design satisfies his feelings, needs, and situation, you have produced printing which is suitable for its purpose.

But customers will not notice all these fine points, one may say. There is no reason why they should—they are not printers! But it is distinctly the printer's job and what he is paid for, to help the success of the occasion by making his small part in it as perfect as he can. If he does, in time people will come to him for such printing, because they will say his work is "so right." So it is very much the printer's business to see that as Jack comes home from the musical party he does n't say to Jill, "Did you hear what a noise the turning of the programmes made in the middle of that solo?"

Principles

Nor that she replies, "No, but that silly decorated border spoiled a perfectly good pair of white gloves."

Style, said Sir Walter Raleigh, is an index to persons. "Write, and after you have attained to some control over the instrument, you write yourself down whether you will or no. There is no vice, however unconscious, no virtue, however shy, no touch of meanness or of generosity in your character, that will not pass on to the paper." This is as true of printing as it is of writing. If you have anything in you, good or bad, you will translate it into the printed work for which you are responsible. In printing, as in literary composition, by expressing yourself (to use Raleigh's words) you "anticipate the day of judgment and furnish the recording angel with the material."

Having refined our taste by a knowledge of standards, and regarding our work in the light of what is needed to-day, it remains to acquire the one thing needful: that personal touch, that personal note, which shall make our work different from other men's work. The most dangerous moment for an ambi-

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tious designer of printing is that when, having learned something of styles of type and ways of arranging them, he begins to put his schemes into actual form. His ideas do not at first come easily. He is either obsessed by the number of things he has learned—like a young architect who tries to express in his first commission all he has ever been taught at the *École des Beaux Arts*; or he wonders what “the other man” is doing. A pair of horse’s blinders would be useful just then! But this will pass. “There is a time in every man’s education,” says Emerson, “when he arrives at the conviction that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till.” For when he begins thus to toil and to till, he releases for the first time that personal element which is “himself,” and which is so much the best thing he has to put into his work! The same problem in the design of printing is seen differently by every pair of eyes and every mind behind them, and all one


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can suggest is the background against which, the material with which, and the principles by which, your personality must “make good.” Plan your work sincerely and simply, and by and by you will arrive at a way of your own. Follow this way persistently, and inevitably it will make your work personal—so personal that it will not alone differ from the work of the crowd, but from that of any printer on the face of the earth!

Style in the Use of Type



Style
In the Use of Type

 AMONG the illustrations common to books on typography there is a familiar plate which is an admirable lesson to the modern printer—that showing the 1486 specimen sheet of Erhard Ratdolt of Venice and Augsburg, which exhibits the types that Ratdolt had in his office and with which he made his books. There are ten sizes of black-letter, three sizes of roman type, and one size of Greek, and with these and the use of handsome initials he produced beautiful effects. The books printed from this limited collection of types were beautiful because the types were so in themselves and because the very limitations of his material produced a restraint and harmony that gave the work style. To-day, no printing-house would dare to confine itself to such a small equipment.

Again, the cases of books exhibited in the

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King's Library at the British Museum have long seemed to me among the most valuable of courses in typographic education. And the contents of those cases especially which contain the Italian books are educative in the particular of style beyond the others. In fact, to digress a little, no man, I think, can study this splendid collection without recognizing the preëminent excellence of Italian work in the fifteenth and early years of the sixteenth centuries. There is about it a sanity, a lucidity, and a severity which excels the work of other nationalities. One thing about these books is most apparent: that they are related to the book as we know it to-day, which the black-letter books are not. The latter speak of a time which is to the modern man largely an archaeological curiosity. For as a writer on the Renaissance has said, "the rest of Europe was free either to repel or else partly or wholly to accept the mighty impulse which came forth from Italy. Where the latter was the case we may as well be spared the complaints over the early decay of mediaeval faith and civilization. Had these been strong enough to hold their

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ground, they would be alive to this day. If those elegiac natures which long to see them return, could pass but one hour in the midst of them, they would gasp to be back in modern air." And this is true not alone of thought but of life, of the arts and of the trades. I am aware that this is not palatable to those admirers of Ruskin (if anybody reads him nowadays) who accustom themselves to alluding to "the foul torrent of the Renaissance," but who forget that Mr. Ruskin's books were printed in a kind of type which the Renaissance was the first to give! But this is a digression.

The books which had great style and elegance were not, it appears, necessarily dependent upon archaic treatment for these qualities; and are related to books as we to-day know them, more intimately than any that preceded them. From this I should state as an axiom that a book in order to possess style need not be archaic. This self-evident truth is expressed only for the benefit of persons who, possessing more knowledge than judgment, have worked as if they thought otherwise.

Another quality that makes for style is sim-

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plicity; and here again the Italian books have much to teach us. They were strictly simple, depending only on beautiful type, good paper, and a well-proportioned type-page to produce a very elegant result. Any one can place a great red decorated initial upon a page to dazzle the beholder into a momentary liking for the effect. But to produce an agreeable and pleasing page simply by proportion of margins, type, etc., is a matter which requires study, experience, and taste. It appears, therefore, that, as some of the most beautiful books are without decoration, style does not depend upon decoration, but rather on proportion and simplicity.

While to my mind the Italian books of the Renaissance possess the highest qualities of style that the world has seen, I believe it possible to attain much of the same quality in almost any manner that a man may choose to adopt. In this connection one should mention William Morris's work, which possessed great distinction and style. One may agree or disagree with the conclusions he arrived at as to which books were the most beautiful models in printing, but he taught mightily by the body of

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colour and unity of effect which his beautiful pages display. He understood the style in which he worked, its capabilities and its disabilities. He made use even of its disabilities in a way that was decorative.

I have said that distinction of manner is happily not confined to Italian books, nor to the school of Mr. Morris. Nor is it confined to any one set of people. The worker who saw the value of simplicity, proportion, and colour has existed at various times in all countries. We find these qualities in much beautiful sixteenth century French work—that of the Estiennes, for example—and in some of the earliest German work, terrible as certain periods have been in Germany. But if it is the fashion for the Anglo-Saxon to smile self-complacently at some of the Continental printing of the present day, it must be remembered that English printing, which now stands (in my opinion) at the head of typographic achievement, has never been so before. In fact, English printing has not furnished interesting or valuable object lessons in style until within the last hundred and fifty years, and in this statement—which I should hesi-

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tate, perhaps, to make unsupported—I am glad to find myself borne out by Mr. Alfred Pollard, who remarks: “It is quite easy to be struck with the inferiority of English books and their accessories, such as bindings and illustrations, to those produced on the Continent. To compare the books printed by Caxton with the best work of his German or Italian contemporaries, to compare the books bound for Henry, Prince of Wales, with those bound for the Kings of France, to try to find even a dozen English books printed before 1640 with woodcuts (not imported from abroad) of any real artistic merit—if any one is anxious to reinforce his national modesty, here are three very efficacious methods of doing it. . . . And if I am asked at what period English printing has attained that occasional primacy which I have claimed for our exponents of all the bookish arts, I would boldly say that it possesses it at the present day.”

Again, “manner” may be used with charm, and by this I mean a local and characteristic variant of a real style, which has come to have a literary and historical association of its own.

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What we call colonial (or Georgian) printing is nothing more than a rendering (often an overstatement) of certain features of seveneenth and eighteenth century English printing. It is well adapted for old-fashioned reprints, or for commercial work intended to describe or to sell old-fashioned wares, though it is often used as having in itself a beauty which renders it independent of its fitness. The "colonist," could he see the baskets of flowers magnified to the dimensions of giant chap-book illustrations, would disown any part in such obstreperous decoration. The average ornamentation of such books was not of this *genre* at all, but was rather timid in effect. Yet such colonial typography sometimes possesses style. But it must be remembered that style, being dependent on proportion and simplicity, is more readily to be found in work whose mannerisms are less marked and where there is less decoration. With the quaint features and decorations of "colonial" printing suppressed, there is very little left of it. The excellence of any given style seems to consist in its power to exist apart from such things, and thus the better the

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style, the less dependent it is on earmarks or whimsicality.

But there must sometimes be decoration, and here of course enters the element of individual taste. Here again early Italian and French books show that, with a little well-chosen decoration,—just enough to give an air of careful luxury,—the greatest elegance of effect can be arrived at. In all the schools of ornament, again, there is special work which, through its grace and reserve, possesses this same happy quality of style and elegance. In many modern books there are ornamental title-pages which have this quality to a very high degree—in instances where the introduction of a very little good ornament seems to shed over the whole book in which it is employed a light of luxury and grace. The early printers, in many of their beautiful marks, grasped this idea. With a very plain, simple title-page there was yet one spot of decoration, graceful in outline, rich in colour. Badly conceived ornamentation and the *abuse of good ornament* have become so general that one is tempted sometimes to think that the art of decoration is the art of leaving things out !

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Finally, if all work reflects the life of the day in which it is undertaken, to-day's restless and complex life may be reflected in our work, which, in its lack of simplicity and repose, may be but an echo of the time. Possibly, the tasteless exaggeration, and the desire to excel our neighbour in startling effects which we see exemplified in some American printing, may be traced to certain evil qualities in American life. But, on the other hand, the interest in varying styles of work and the open-minded acceptance of them for the printer's purposes is a happy feature of industrial endeavour to-day, and one, too, which is characteristic of our epoch and country. It would be idle to expect in the art of printing that concerted harmony which we do not find in architecture, in painting, or in literature. We must recognize this lack of concert, whether we like it or not. Instead of wishing it otherwise, it is better to accept it, and make the best of it.

To conclude, style in printing does not permanently reside in any one manner of work, but in those principles on which almost all


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manners of work may be based. We have to be thankful that of late things are turning in the direction of greater simplicity, greater reserve, and less decoration. And as the printer is more and more deprived of adventitious aids, he will find himself face to face with those fundamental principles of style which have marked the work of the great printers of the past; as they must the work of those to come.

The Seven Champions of Typography



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 HERE was once upon a time a curate, whose cast of thought ran to symbolism, and who became so fascinated by the mystical meanings of the number seven, that one day, being called upon unexpectedly to preach, he inflicted on his congregation all that he could for the moment remember of seven-fold numbers occurring in the Old and New Testaments—the days of creation, the gifts of the Spirit, the seven churches of Asia, etc.; but like many extempore speakers before and since, he suddenly became confused and ended his phrase precipitately with the surprising words, “And we all remember, dear brethren, that there were seven apostles—plus five!”

When I entitled this paper *The Seven Champions of Typography* I had in mind (being a lay person) the seven champions of Christen-

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dom, the seven wonders of the world, the seven seas, stars, deadly sins, liberal arts, and some other “sevens.” But on counting up my champions, I was disconcerted to discover that there were but six—thus (like the curate) finding myself suddenly at sixes and sevens in more senses than one. Yet why spoil a good title for a mere detail! That royal and unpleasant spinster called Good Queen Bess or the Virgin Queen—who appears according to the best modern authorities to have been neither—is said to have considered a lie to be merely an intellectual way of getting over a difficulty. Perhaps so: but, even then, remembering the precept of St. Francis de Sales, “Little things for little people,” we have our little scruples. So I propose to make my title good by adding to six Champions of Typography—Spacing, Leading, Indentation, Ink, Paper, and Imposition—one more—the most important of all, without which (as is alleged of charity) the rest profiteth nothing. That Seventh Champion, dear Reader, is *You*. And it all depends on how seriously you take the following pages, whether my title turns out to be truth

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or falsehood! I assume for it no further responsibility.

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No matter how admirably we plan our work, nor how fine in design are the types we select, its appearance when printed depends on good composition,—the combination of type into words, the arrangement of words in lines, and the assemblage of lines to make pages. And composition falls into three divisions, spacing, leading, and proper indentation—all factors in the effect of a type-page. Furthermore, the successful presentation of our printing depends upon three things more — ink, colour of paper, and proper imposition on that paper. On these six points — for I shall not bore the reader and myself by continuing the “champion” nomenclature—the successful effect of our plans for printing and the use of good type-forms must rely.

I. Spacing is a term used in connection with composition to describe the space between the words in a line of type, or the lateral distance of one word from another. It plays an extremely important part in composition. Everybody

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knows that there must be space between words, but the problem for the printer is its proper adjustment. This is effected by the discriminating use of spaces of different thickness, just as leading—the proper adjustment of space between lines—requires the intelligent use of leads.

The spaces between words in a line should be apparently uniform. If they were *exactly* uniform, they would not seem so to the eye; more space being required between two ascending lower-case letters such as “l,” which may end one word and begin another (as in “medical libraries”), than between a “y” and an “a” (as in “any author”). “In good printing,” said William Morris, in his paper on “Printing” in *Arts and Crafts Essays*, “the spaces between the words should be as near as possible equal (it is impossible that they should be quite equal except in lines of poetry); modern printers understand this, but it is only practised in the very best establishments. But another point which they should attend to they almost always disregard; this is the tendency to the formation of ugly meandering white

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lines or 'rivers' in the page, a blemish which can be nearly, though not wholly, avoided by care and forethought, the desirable thing being 'the breaking of the line' as in bonding masonry or brickwork, thus :

The general *solidity* of a page is much to be sought for : modern printers generally overdo the 'whites' in the spacing, a defect probably forced on them by the characterless quality of the letters. For where these are boldly and carefully designed, and each letter is thoroughly individual in form, the words may be set much closer together, without loss of clearness. No definite rules, however, except the avoidance of 'rivers'* and excess of white, can be given for the spacing, which requires the constant exercise of judgment and taste on the part of the printer." On looking at the page of Mr. Morris's essay about proper spacing, we find the enemy has sown tares in the field, for in derision of Mr. Morris's own theories, a large

* "Dog's-teeth," or as Moxon called them, "pigeon-holes."

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white “river” runs across the very phrase in which he deplores them ! The book was issued under the auspices of the London Society of Arts and Crafts—an example of how much easier it is to tell people that work should be done “so that our commonest things are beautiful,” than it is to put the precept into practice !

While I cannot agree with much that has been said about the folly of close spacing and pages of type set solid (*i.e.* without leading), as if it were merely an affected return to archaic methods and a perverse desire to make books unreadable, some modern printers, in their efforts to obtain “colour” in a page, have undoubtedly forgotten that the spacing of a line must be sufficient to make a distinct separation between words and one sufficient to be *readily* apparent to the eye. A good test of spacing is to hold a printed page upside down, when, the sense of the words not being caught, the eye more readily perceives whether the spacing of the page is even or not.

An old and rather ignorant prejudice against the breaking of words makes against good spacing. It is better not to break words if one can

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help it, but often they must be broken, if good spacing is to be maintained. Many printers who may be willing to break single words consider that two consecutive lines should not end with hyphens ; but hyphens at the end of two, three, or even four successive lines, while undesirable, are not so ugly as matter unevenly spaced to avoid them.* The problem is to space evenly in spite of these difficulties. Then again bad spacing may often be the result of corrections. Sometimes replacing one letter by another makes no change in the proper spacing of a line ; but when words are replaced by longer or shorter ones, or when whole phrases are inserted, serious difficulties occur. Useless and expensive changes are often ordered by an author because he does not know the tedious process by which they are effected, or realize that the substitution of one word for another may necessitate carrying over words or parts of words for several lines. Yet if, to avoid ex-

* Entire books have been printed without a single broken word. An example of this is Marcellin Brun's *Manuel pratique et abrégé de la Typographie française* — the first edition printed by Didot père et fils at Paris in 1825, and the second by Vroom of Brussels in 1826. The latter is a 12mo volume of two hundred and forty pages, and is set in 8-point type, with notes in a still smaller size.

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pense, this is not done, the result is uneven, and therefore bad, spacing.

The principles of good spacing which have been stated are of equal application to machine-set type. If by the use of type-setting machines printers cannot follow this "counsel of perfection," it would appear to show that, as yet, the best hand composition is better.

II. The excessive indentation of paragraphs, and em width spaces between sentences, are usually unnecessary. In an early printed book the paragraphs were indented to allow a paragraph mark to be put in by hand. Often the paragraph marks were never filled in, and this led to the discovery that the eye could pick out beginnings of paragraphs by blanks almost as well as by paragraph marks. While a paragraph mark preserved more or less the desirable regularity of outline of the page, whereas a blank space broke it, for clearness it was necessary that it should be broken; but not to such an extent as it often is by modern indentation.

Again, the conventional use of an em quad at the beginning of a new sentence is unneces-

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sary and makes “holes” in the composition of pages. In most cases, the same spacing used between other words in the line, together with the period at the end of one sentence and the capital letter at the beginning of the next, make a sufficient break.

III. Leading is to lines what spacing is to words; and the introduction of leads between lines of type has a great deal to do with the effect of a page. Type set solid is usually hard to read, and slight leading improves its legibility. When to lead and how much to lead is a matter of taste and judgment. For with the same type the colour of a page can be increased or decreased by its leading. Nor does every type demand the same amount of leading. Black-letter, although in early times occasionally leaded for purposes of manuscript interlineation, should normally never be leaded, and should be closely spaced: for leading of black-letter makes a “striped” page; open spacing, a page full of holes. On the other hand, light faces of roman type almost always look better leaded, and sometimes require slightly open spacing. So it will be seen that the effect of

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printed pages often depends on leading and spacing as well as on the face of type employed. The leading of the same kind of type in a given book should be uniform throughout. There is no more wretched product in typography than a book in which, for reasons of economy or convenience, pages which should have the same leading or the same size of type throughout are set with less leading or in a smaller type to "get the matter in."

An unbroken type-page when held at a little distance should make a perfectly defined block of even tint. This impression on paper of a definite parallelogram which is practically uniform in tone is a chief factor in the beauty of a printed book. Early books were remarkable for the even colour of their pages, and that is one reason that they give the eye a sense of satisfaction. This was arrived at by the use of types which were masculine in design and fairly uniform in weight of line, set solid, and close spaced. "Experience proves," says Day, "that the eye is best satisfied by a tolerably uniform distribution of the letters, Roman, Gothic, or whatever their character, over it [the

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page], so that they give at first sight the impression of a fairly even surface, distinguished from the surrounding surface (that is, the margin) more by a difference of tint than by any appreciable letter-forms within the mass.”*

What about machine composition and type-faces for machine-work, some one may ask? To answer this very proper question I must make a digression. The introduction of a linotype or monotype into a printing-office is open to no objection, provided the machine is operated with the same care that is taken with the best hand-setting, in which case the cost is often, I fear, much the same as if set by hand; for the proper justification of the lines of type reduces the rapidity of their product. Usually machines have not been carefully worked, and to judge them by their ordinary product is not fair. Then again machines can be desirably employed only in printing-houses which have enough work of the kind that can be *well done* upon such machines. They cannot always readily or quickly perform certain sorts of composition, in spite of the ingenious exhibits of

* Day's *Lettering in Ornament*, London, 1902, p. 20.

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this sort of type-setting which are shown as specimens of their work.

The collection of matrices from which types are cast, on both linotype and monotype machines, has been, until lately, unworthy of their pretensions, and it is difficult to see on what principle such a variety of mean types, differing so slightly from one another, were for many years "the only wear." Nowadays they are enormously improved, and the best of them have been used for book-work with marked success.

On the other hand, it is absurd to be prejudiced by a machine or machine-work because it is mechanical; the results obtained are what really count. Some ultra-conservative men are (or have been) foolish enough to shy at new inventions in machinery—for type-setting, for instance. They feel that somehow a "modern spirit" is in the machinery, and that in some sly and malign way it will defeat artistic excellence! This is quite childish. The problem is to determine how work can be done best. If for some typography the old method (incidentally endeared to the lover of

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early printing by historical associations) produces a better result than a modern machine, then the old method may be adhered to. If a modern machine does other classes of printing better and quicker than the old method and more conveniently for the workmen, it is to be adopted. The tendency about us, it is true, is to glorify speed, without paying attention to the details of the result. "This machine," says the seller, "can turn out so many ems per hour"; but one must regard only *how many ems properly set up* such a machine can turn out, and not be beguiled by speed, which is an attribute of excellence in automobiles, but not the sole question in type-setting ! To judge between the sentimentalist who believes that all virtue resides in the hand, and the commercialist who thinks that salvation is obtained by a machine, is not easy. I prefer good machine work to bad hand work and vice versa. If one is as good as the other,— incidentally I have my doubts,—I take the quickest and cheapest. But I quote without comment the statement of a distinguished colleague— whose name is withheld for what we are nowadays pleased to

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call prudential reasons—"The machine is like a jungle animal, more or less obedient under the whip, but always a wild animal."

IV. To show good type-setting (whether set by machine or by hand) to advantage, the inking of a page must be even. Composition, no matter how careful, is dependent on good ink and the right amount of it. The letters in a printed page, if not well inked, show, when examined through a magnifying glass, little specks of white through the black, and the effect of the type, as a whole, is lifeless and faded. The result of using too much ink is so obvious that it is needless to say anything about it.

Furthermore, ink must be black. A great deal of the so-called black ink used in modern books has a brown, green, pink, or blue tinge. If a good black ink is compared with inks commonly employed, it will be found that there is little that is really black. It is cheaper to make ink of materials that give it disagreeable tinges than to use the proper ingredients. But no page will be effective or lively except when printed in pure black ink.

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V. Though ink must be black, paper should not always be white. The somewhat irregular Caslon type (and some “period” and transitional types) appears much more agreeably when printed on a slightly rough paper of a cream tint. Caslon’s types in his day were printed on wet paper, which thickened their lines and roughened the paper, so that we get more nearly the effect that he meant them to have when we print them on toned, rough paper. If smooth white paper is used for old style types, it exposes their slight crudities of form in a disagreeable way, and accents too much the shape of individual letters. This is understood by some type-founders, who for that reason often display their old style types on toned paper. Many people prefer a smooth and pure white paper (or think they do) because they look at the paper alone, and do not realize that its colour makes any difference in the effect of printing. Some of the lighter modern-faced types look well on a paper that is nearly white ; for they are more clean cut, more regular in shape, and have not the irregularities which such a paper reveals. For these types

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the paper should *look* white. There are, fortunately, few absolutely white printing papers.

VI. And finally, there is imposition. A page of type, however well set, well spaced, well inked, and printed on suitable paper, may be a complete failure unless well "imposed." "It is no less effective than it is logical," says Morris, "to consider two pages of the open book as one area on which to plant, as it were, two columns of print. A very considerable reduction of the inner margins, as compared with the outer and the upper and lower, has this effect; and it is perhaps the most satisfactory way of imposing the page—if only the binder were to be depended upon. Unless the folding of the sheets is perfect, the two patches of print do not range, and the closer they come together the more obtrusive is the fault; it is not so easily detected when there is a broad space of white between." A well-imposed page, which is to show off the type properly, must have margins widest at the bottom, narrower at the outside, narrower still at the top, and narrowest of all on the inside. If type-pages are imposed in the centre of a paper

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page, the margins appear less at the bottom than at the top, and the combined inside margins of pages thus imposed, in an open book seem so wide that the print appears to be falling out of it! I believe that there are various *formulae* that are intended to effect perfect imposition; but they are not infallible in their results.

To sum up, therefore, pages of type—however fine in design—must be carefully spaced, tastefully leaded, moderately indented, thoroughly inked, printed on paper suited to their design, and properly imposed. Neglect one of these requirements, and the result is failure. But—and it is the eternal “but” of the half-hearted printer—why should one adopt a style of printing which involves much more labour and little more return? The answer is that these simple but laborious requirements have always been met in the best printing; and that all this is merely typographical truth. It would be easier, no doubt, to believe that there is something wrong about the idea. But there isn’t.

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Nor is there anything that is new in all this; for in principle it would be admitted by most printers. Yet what men often mean when they talk of principles is a mere theory of conduct upon which they have never acted. The theory becomes a principle only when practised. And thus it depends on *You* whether you will be the Seventh Champion of good typography or not. Perhaps you may find it easier to be a deserter. If so, like the dwindling company of little nigger boys in the old song,

“And then there were Six!”



